

T-520

MERRY WIDOW (5-log Poquoson canoe)

St. Michaels, Maryland

This vessel is a 28'6" long five-log Poquoson-style sailing canoe with a single, sprit-rigged mast and a steering oar. She was built c. 1880-1910 either in St. Mary's River, Maryland or near Norfolk, Virginia, of local loblolly pine logs. Her building is attributed to Captain Will Knotts and she was a working boat, used for tonging oysters. She is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. MERRY WIDOW is significant as being a rare survival of the Poquoson type of log canoe indigenous to the Western Shore of the lower Chesapeake, near Poquoson, Virginia. She gains added significance for having been restored by the noted local boatbuilder Curtis Applegarth in 1967. This vessel is a particular interest as an educational tool because the log construction of the hull is still quite visible.

**Maryland Historical Trust**  
**State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

Survey No. T-520  
Magi No. 2105205633  
DOE   yes   no

**1. Name** (indicate preferred name)

historic

MERRY WIDOW

and/or common

5-log Poquoson -style canoe CBMM 67-129-1

**2. Location**

street & number

Mill Street

   not for publication

city, town

St. Michaels

   vicinity of

congressional district

state

Maryland

county

Talbot

**3. Classification**

**Category**

   district  
   building(s)  
   structure  
   site  
☒ object

**Ownership**

☒ public  
   private  
   both

**Public Acquisition**

   in process  
   being considered  
☒ not applicable

**Status**

   occupied  
☒ unoccupied  
   work in progress

**Accessible**

   yes: restricted  
☒ yes: unrestricted  
   no

**Present Use**

   agriculture  
   commercial  
☒ educational  
   entertainment  
   government  
   industrial  
   military

   museum  
   park  
   private residence  
   religious  
   scientific  
   transportation  
   other:

**4. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

street & number

telephone no.: 745-2916

city, town

St. Michaels

state and zip code Maryland 21663

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

liber

street & number

folio

city, town

state

**6. Representation in Existing** Historical Surveys

title

date

   federal    state    county    local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

Survey No. T-520

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☒ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This boat is a double-ended, five-log Poquoson-style sailing canoe, with a single sprit-rigged mast and a steering oar. She measures 28'6" long, with a 7-foot beam. She was built c. 1880-1910, either in St. Mary's River, Maryland or near Norfolk, Virginia, of local loblolly pine logs. Her building is attributed to Captain Will Knotts. She was a working boat, used for tonging for oysters. As currently displayed at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels, she has a culling board for oysters set across her washboards. The boat was motorized at one point in her career and a shaft log added to reinforce her stern. She was restored to her sailing state before her donation to the Museum by Curtis Applegarth of Oxford, a noted local boatbuilder. The boat is painted white, with gray paint on the log decks.

Built of five logs fastened together with iron drift pins, the canoe has a shoe deepening to a 6" skeg at the stern. There are ten sawn hanging knees supporting foot-wide angled washboards. The hull is further reinforced with one set of full frames and a set of half frames at the bow. The washboards are in three sections of planking, scarfed together, with rubbing strakes added outboard and 1'-high coaming inboard. A straight raking stem post and a 45"-high straight stern post were added to the log hull along with filler planks at bow and stern. There is a centerboard trunk measuring 8'5" long by 12" wide on deck, tapering to 4 1/2" wide at its tip. A 4' long stern seat is laid out of five planks set side by side but this may not be original to the boat.

When under sail the canoe was steered with an 11-foot, long-bladed oar rather than a rudder-and-tiller arrangement. The rig was a single spritsail on an unstayed mast, set into a 10"-wide mast step fitted athwartships at the bow. The engine has been removed from the boat although the shaft log in the stern remains.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. T-520

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education   | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce    | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)           |

Specific dates c. 1880-1910 Builder/Architect attribution to Captain Will Knotts

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being a rare survival of the Poquoson type of log canoe indigenous to the Western Shore of the lower Chesapeake, near Poquoson, Virginia. She was built c. 1880-1910 either in St. Mary's River, Maryland, or near Norfolk, Virginia and the building is attributed to Captain Will Knotts. She was built as a working canoe with the typical Poquoson single sprit-rigged mast but was altered for power at some point in her career. Thus the canoe provides a good example of the common practice of altering the early sailing canoes to power as gasoline engines became available in the early years of this century. These converted sailing canoes were the first power boats on the Chesapeake.

MERRY WIDOW is also of significance for having been restored by the noted local boatbuilder Curtis Applegarth before being donated to the Museum in 1967. Applegarth removed the engine from the boat and restored her to her former sailing state with a single mast Poquoson rig. The vessel is of particular interest as an educational tool because the log construction of the hull is still quite visible under the layers of white paint.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-520

Marion V. Brewington, Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes (Cambridge, Md.: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
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| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St. telephone 685-3750

city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

T-520  
5-Log Poquoson Canoe MERRY WIDOW  
Small Boat Exhibit Shed (T-626)  
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum  
Mill St.  
St. Michaels  
Saint Michaels Quad.  
Talbot Co.





353-15

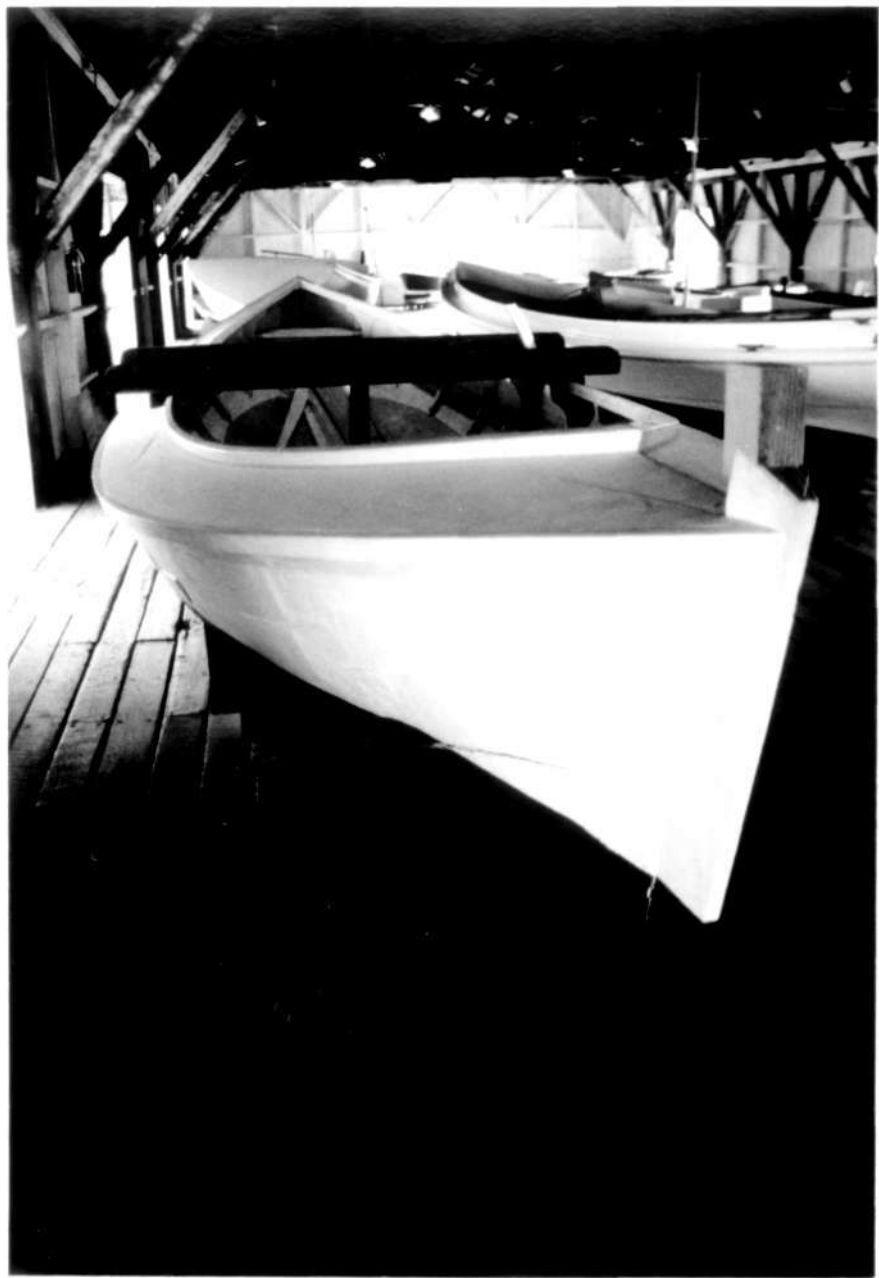
T-520

MERRY WIDOW

St. Michaels, Md

M. C. Wootton     5/84





T-520

MERRY WIDOW  
St. Michaels, Md.

Stern

A.E. Witty 5/84